



Date: January 19, 2022
To: Library Board Members
From: Paul Takala, CEO/Chief Librarian
Subject: Update on HPL's COVID-19 Response

INTRODUCTION

We start 2022 with the pandemic at a challenging moment. While the relatively high levels of COVID-19 vaccination we have in our community provides significant protection against serious outcomes, the high rate of transmissibility of the Omicron variant is creating significant stress on our health care system and is impacting staff absenteeism. Like other organizations, we are finding that staff are having to self-isolate at home due to exposure to COVID-19 for themselves or other members of their household.

LIBRARY SERVICE HOURS

In response to staff secondments to Public Health to support the vaccination efforts and absences due to COVID-19, we start the year on temporarily reduced service hours. Currently, the schedule is as follows:

- **Open Hours all Locations:** Tuesday-Thursday – 10am-6pm; Friday-Saturday – 10am-5pm. (Exceptions - Carlisle, Greenville and Mount Hope open at 1pm instead of 10am)
- **Short Term Outlook:** Like many other organizations, the widespread transmission of Omicron is impacting staffing at HPL. Because we are already on reduced hours, we have been able to maintain the current schedule. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is monitoring the status of staffing daily. The current plan is to maintain the schedule. If absences require temporary closures, we will implement them. A pattern of temporary closures would cause us to revisit the schedule. Once the staffing situation stabilizes, we will start to add back service hours based on capacity. Central would be the first location to see the hours expanded.

OTHER OPERATIONS DETAILS

HPL continues to be open for service, with Members able to use the computers, WiFi, printing and have access to collections. Regulations have required us to reduce capacity to 50%. Because of the current high level of risk, the Library Board Chair and I issued an open letter to encourage adherence to safety protocols and to request Members consider their personal safety and reduce the frequency and duration of Library visitsⁱ. We have done this instead of imposing time limits on members visiting because we are concerned about vulnerable individuals not having a safe and warm place to go during the day. We also do not want to limit the amount of time students can study and do work. Usage is still steady with people coming into HPL to get their proof of vaccination printed and laminated.

We continue to follow all safety protocols and are hoping to see the situation stabilize so we can get back to our plan of building out Library services. We are supporting work from home when it is feasible, although with our services so public facing our ability to do this is limited.

In an effort to reduce any additional strain on the healthcare system, we will temporarily suspend the requirement that staff provide a medical note if they are absent due to a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 and/or are required to isolate as a result of COVID-19.

Our plans to start in-person events in Q1 of this year has been put on hold due to the Omicron variant. We continue the process of filling vacancies, however, that process has slowed somewhat. We do not know yet when our seconded staff will return to HPL. We will keep the Library Board informed of major developments.

ⁱ <https://www.hpl.ca/sites/default/files/22-01-04%20SpecialMessageServiceChanges.pdf>